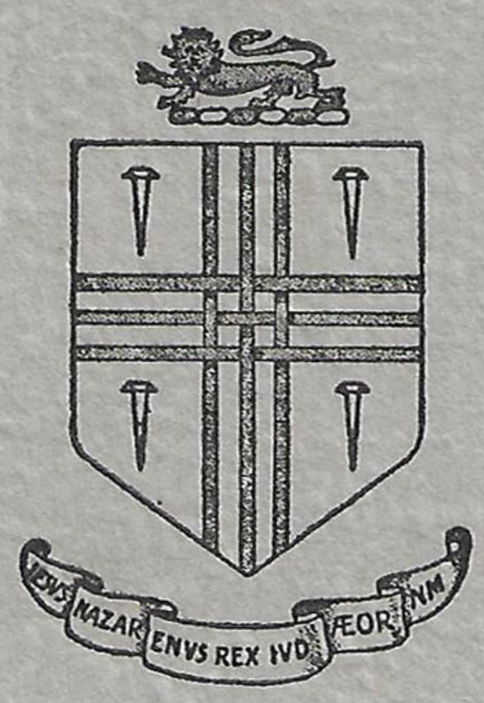
The Church of the Redeemer

Bryn Mawr, Lower Merion

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



1851-1951

A Brief History of the Parish

by

ERNEST C. EARP

The Church of the Redeemer

Bryn Mawr, Lower Merion

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

1851-1951

A Brief History of the Parish

by

ERNEST C. EARP

Published by the Vestry

to mark

THE HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY

The First Church of the Redeemer
1852

THE RECTORS

1851-1855

THE REVEREND HENRY BROWN

1856-1856

THE REVEREND GEORGE S. RIDER

1856-1878

THE REVEREND EDWARD L. LYCETT

1878-1886

THE REVEREND EDWARD S. WATSON, D.D.

1887-1909

THE REVEREND JAMES HAUGHTON

1910-1929

THE REVEREND GEORGE C. CARTER, D.D.

1929-1949

THE REVEREND ERNEST C. EARP, D.D., S.T.D.

1949-

THE REVEREND THORNE SPARKMAN, D.D.

PREFACE

In September 1681 a grant of lands along the Schuylkill, near the proposed city of Philadelphia, was made to a group of Welsh settlers in the territory which is now Lower Merion Township. Soon after their arrival there was constructed the Merion Meeting House, and that first place of worship still stands at the corner of Montgomery Avenue and Meeting House Lane. In it there is a stone inscribed 1695 which is presumed to mark the completion of the building. In 1765 a group of German Lutherans organized St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ardmore; second in age only to the Merion Meeting House. In 1808 there was donated land for the meeting house of the Lower Merion Baptist Church, located at the junction of Old Gulph and New Gulph Road. Such was the beginning of the worship of God in their own way by the early settlers of Pennsylvania.

Here in Lower Merion in 1777 Washington's army camped in what was then called Price's field, extending on Montgomery Avenue from Meeting House Lane to Old Gulph Road. The Township was settled because of its ease of access. The Schuylkill was the first artery of traffic, large canoes being used upon it to transport goods. Then came the canal along the River for the heavier traffic. The first roads in Lower Merion were but trails; horse and foot transportation only were available. Old Gulph Road was one of the first of these. With the development of settlements further west there was a demand for better transportation and

the Pike was built from Philadelphia to Lancaster in 1798. So it was that the Lancaster Turnpike, passing through Lower Merion, played a great part in developing the Township. Then came the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad through Lower Merion, forming part of the main line of the Public Works of Pennsylvania—a system of canals and portages from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, opened for use as far as Paoli in 1832, winding its way paralleling Montgomery Avenue to Ardmore and Haverford to Rosemont on Old Railroad Avenue.

Originally in Philadelphia County, Lower Merion Township became part of Montgomery County, which was separated from Philadelphia County in 1784. In this little Township of 3,500 souls in 1851 there was founded the Church of the Redeemer.

THE CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

One hundred years ago there was no Episcopal Church between the city of Philadelphia and Old St. David's, Radnor. The first Episcopal Parish in Lower Merion Township was organized on Sunday, August 3, 1851, in Temperance Hall, above the eight mile-stone on Lancaster Pike. After divine service had been conducted by the Rev. Henry Brown, Rector of St. David's Church, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a parish. The following persons were selected to act as vestrymen: Frederick W. Porter, Jesse Gyer, Isaac Hazelhurst, John Hulme, Lewis Wister, David Morgan, James Morgan, Owen Jones, Joseph K. Eyre.

The first vestry meeting was held on August 9, 1851, when the Rev. Henry Brown was chosen Rector of the parish to be called St. Luke's. His salary was $300.00 per year. A sexton was engaged at $30.00 per year. A resolution passed at the meeting reads—"that it is desirable and expedient to commence without delay the erection of a church edifice." The building committee acted with commendable dispatch for on October 30th the vestry resolved to purchase a parcel of land on the corner of Lancaster Pike and Buck Lane, one and one quarter acres in extent, for the modest sum of $425 "with a deduction of $120 off for cash." With subscriptions in hand totaling $1,600, the vestry called for plans of a church to "cost not more than $2,000."

On November 22nd, 1851, the vestry resolved "whereas many friends of the church prefer the name 'Church of the Redeemer' to that of St. Luke, it is agreed to adopt the change."

On November 21st, 1851, the cornerstone of the first Church of the Redeemer was laid by the Bishop of Pennsylvania, the Rt. Rev. Alonzo Potter, D.D. Plans and specifications called for a church to seat 300 persons complete with tower and pews and other furnishings for the sum of $2,800. The completed building, surrounded by a picket fence was described as "the picturesque English-looking Church by the side of the railway." The church yard was used for burials. On February 3rd, 1852, the Charter of Incorporation was granted by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. The charter and by-laws were published in pamphlet form in 1853.

The Rev. Henry Brown resigned from St. David's parish and also from the Church of the Redeemer on September 23rd, 1855. The parish decided to call a full-time rector at a salary of $1,000 per year and a house was rented as a Rectory at $200 yearly. The Rev. George S. Rider succeeded Mr. Brown on February 9th, 1856, and resigned on April 27th of the same year, surely a record in brevity! The church had a distinguished parishioner in the person of the Rev. J. G. Lyon, LL.D., headmaster of a boys' school in Bryn Mawr. He was in charge of the parish from April to October in 1856 and rendered valuable help to the Rector until his death in 1868. He is buried in the churchyard to the east of the chapel.

With the appointment of the Rev. Edward L. Lycett on September 7th, 1856, the parish began an era of intensive and expansive development which continued during his rectorate of twenty-two years. Mr. Lycett was born in London on April 8th, 1820, and came to America in 1832 and was ordained in 1855. In addition to services in the parish church, he held cottage

meetings in Conshohocken. Beginning with one communicant he continued the services for five years leaving a church building costing $3,500. Having established this new parish, he started the mission at Mill Creek, holding the first services in the Rectory dining room. Soon a chapel was founded with Sunday School and evening service. His next effort was in the village of Ardmore where he held evening services in the Masonic Hall. This modest beginning developed into the flourishing parish of St. Mary's, Ardmore, which became independent of the mother church in 1887.

At the Church of the Redeemer Mr. Lycett was able to declare the parish free of debts and the church was consecrated by the Bishop of Pennsylvania on September 2nd, 1857. With foresight and good judgment the vestry bought the ground on which the church now stands "containing 9¼ acres at one hundred and fifty dollars an acre," on September 10th, 1860. Hard times must have oppressed the vestry which recorded resolutions to sell the property for $200.00 per acre and to reduce the Rector's salary from $1,000 to $700.00. Both these resolutions were subsequently rescinded and the property retained. In 1866 a horse and cow were given the Rector whose salary had risen to $1,500.00. Extensive repairs and alterations were made in the Church in 1863 at a cost of $1,700.00.

The present site was unoccupied from 1861 to 1872 when the Rectory was built at a cost of $12,702.00, in what was described as a forest of trees. The following letter was written to Canon Earp twenty years ago on the 50th anniversary of the present building by Mr. John W. Townsend, who had been a communicant of the parish for sixty years.

"I was superintendent of your Church's first Sunday School, when one very small building sufficed both Church and School — near Haverford Station, but the credit for the School's start and progress belonged to the then Rector's daughter. After the Church bought the present grounds, it was several years before it could build a church. In the meantime it built the present Rectory and the Rector's family moved from the old Revolutionary house on Mill Creek, which was once occupied by a Quaker who was hung by General Washington on a false charge, the result of his religious pacifism. During the Rector's occupation of his new home, the present 'God's Acre' was a dense woods with post and rail fence between it and the Rectory. Back of the present Parish House was an old time stile in the fence, upon which I frequently rested. As a boy I spent much of my time on horseback and my horse and I both enjoyed scampering up a steep little hill where the Gulph Road Stone Steps now are. Wending our way through the woods I remember one day finding the Rector's daughter seated on the stile. Putting my horse's rein over the post I sat down beside her. She was doing the family's darning while holding her little sister in her lap. She soon said: 'Here! take the baby, John. I can't mend socks and tend baby at the same time.' I found it quite an undertaking, being entirely inexperienced with this variety of human kind.

"When the Church's new grounds were laid out, I obtained a small section and it is a remarkably providential fact to be thankful for, that it has never had a tenant, remaining today an excep-

tional vacancy in a forest of memorials, though we have eleven children and children-in-law with ten grandchildren and the grandparents have passed their Golden Anniversary.

Sincerely yours,
"JOHN W. TOWNSEND"

At a special meeting of the Vestry on August 21st, 1871 the first mention of a new church is made. A committee "to report a detailed plan for laying out the grounds for a cemetery including the site for a new church" was appointed March 20th, 1872. The Church Extension Society was formed in 1873 "for the purpose of collecting money for the building of a new church." However, the indomitable Rector did not live to see his dream of a new church come true. Mr. Lycett passed away on August 5th, 1878, deeply mourned and greatly beloved. The vestry records read:

> "We look back with pride at the history of our parish under his charge. With bounds reaching from St. David's to the City of Philadelphia and from the Schuylkill River on the north east to Chester on the Southwest — its only property a church building burdened with debt — we see it now with a vigorous congregation, a valuable property, a Rectory, a growing mission at Ardmore, and all free of debt. We record our high appreciation of his true Christian character and long and faithful service not only to us but to the whole community."

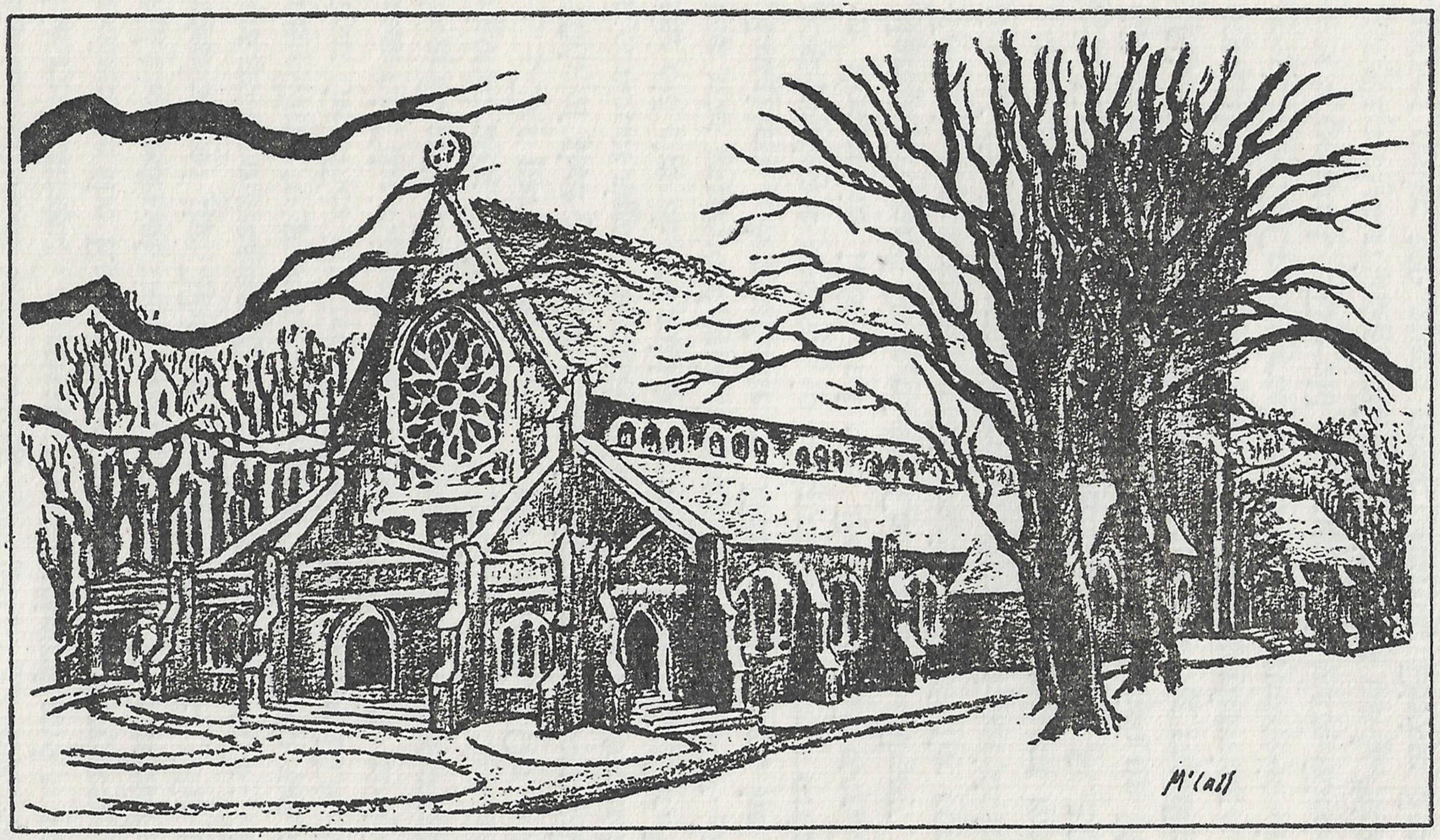
Some of the members of the present congregation can remember Mr. Lycett's family and the old Church on Lancaster Pike. They recall with affectionate remembrance the two daughters, Miss Emily Lycett, the

organist, and Miss Mary who sang in the choir. Both were teachers in the Sunday School. One daughter, Miss Rebecca, is still living. Mr. William M. Lycett, who died in 1944 presented Canon Earp with several books belonging to his revered father, including a valuable Bible bearing the imprint of 1495.

The stone figures in the chancel are the parish memorial to the distinguished Rector.

With the coming of the Rev. Edward Shippen Watson, elected rector on November 28th, 1878, the new church project went forward. The vestrymen at the time the church was built were: Messrs. N. Parker Shortridge and George Curwen, wardens; J. Hunter Ewing, James Rawle, Frederick W. Morris, Charles Wheeler, Henry Whelen, Archibald R. Montgomery and Rowland Evans. The cornerstone was laid by the Bishop of Nebraska, the Rt. Rev. Harper Clarkson, D.D., on November 8th, 1879. Eighteen months later on Easter Day 1881 the first services were held in the church. The architect, Mr. Charles M. Burns, Jr., had designed the Rectory and later made the plans for the parish house. The contract estimate for the present church building was $18,500.00 and the completed church cost $23,996.00. In the final report to the vestry the Building Committee stated: "We congratulate you on the successful completion of this very beautiful church for the worship of Almighty God, and we desire to render to our Heavenly Father praise and thanksgiving that not a single accident happened during its erection."

On October 6th, 1881, the church and the churchyard were consecrated by the Bishop of Pennsylvania, the Rt. Rev. Wm. Bacon Stevens, D.D. Dr. Watson's rectorate lasted only eight years and was marked by



The Church of the Redeemer — Bryn Mawr

"faithful, and wise and tender ministrations." The Rector suffered from failing eyesight and twice offered his resignation. A curate was appointed and with his assistance the Rector could carry on the services. The old members of the congregation record his remarkable memory of the Bible and the Prayer Book. His third resignation was accepted in 1886. He records: "I am unwilling to prolong the strain and peril to my sight that the office involves." The vestry assured Dr. Watson of "their great regret that a connection so highly beneficial to the parish and so agreeable to its members should now be brought to an end."

The parish house was built in 1885. On August 10th of that year Mr. Burn's plans were accepted and a contract signed for $10,500. Some of the stones from the old church are said to be in this building. Dr. Watson was succeeded in February 1887 by the Rev. James Haughton. A graduate of Harvard College, he took post-graduate courses in Germany. He was ordained in Boston in 1866 and was Rector of Exeter, New Hampshire, and Dean of the Cathedral at Albany, New York, before coming to this parish. With the completion of the buildings, church, rectory and parish house, a period of tranquil growth and development marked Mr. Haughton's twenty-two years as rector. St. Mary's Mission, Ardmore, became a separate parish on March 15th, 1887. The community was growing rapidly and soon the new church was filled to overflowing. The work at Mill Creek developed so that a curate-in-charge was appointed. The old carriage stalls were filled with horses and carriages and complaint was made "that the horses make too much noise" during Divine Service. (In 1907 the Vestry moved "that automobiles be restricted from coming into the churchyard.") It became

necessary to hold an extra service at 9:30 A.M. to accommodate all the worshippers. The choir room was added to the church in 1891 at a cost of $4,590. Some of the material, including the windows were parts of the old church. Steam heating was installed in 1892 costing $3,500. The parish continued to grow with "increased numbers of communicants, the additional services and the establishment of outside missionary work."

Mr. Haughton's relations with the parish were always cordial and this happy condition continued until November 1909 when he resigned for reasons of age. The minutes read: "The vestry desires to place on record their full appreciation of his long and faithful service. He has always been most kind and considerate and we shall miss his genial ways and gentle and calm words of advice and encouragement." Those who still remember him speak with affection of this gentle man of God. Members of his family are still with us, in happy fellowship in the Church.

The Rev. George Calvert Carter, M.A., of Trinity College and D.D. of St. John's College, Annapolis, was elected rector on January 21st, 1910, and assumed charge of the parish on April 1st of that year. Before coming to Bryn Mawr he was rector of the Church of the Redeemer in Brooklyn, New York, and of St. Andrew's Church, Washington, D. C. The work of the parish continued to prosper and three months after Dr. Carter came it was decided to enlarge the church by adding two bays to the nave. Contracts were signed amounting to $38,552 and on March 10th, 1912, the addition was consecrated. Mr. James Rawle was chairman of the Building Committee, working early and late for its completion.

Alterations and additions to the Rectory at this time cost over $10,000. The work at Mill Creek Mission developed and in 1911 St. Joseph's Chapel was built at Gladwyne. Perhaps the most significant effort during Dr. Carter's incumbency was the founding of the Endowment Fund in 1912. This wise provision has resulted in an endowment of over $100,000 at the present time, to which sum we hope to add much as the years go by.

The beautiful chapel was built in 1914 in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Frank D. Lalanne.

Increasing support throughout all the years since 1851 was given to the missionary work of the church. Dr. Carter was active in Diocesan affairs and in various church societies. Many memorials were given to adorn the church building, chiefly the carved stone work in the chancel and baptistry, the great west window and several other memorial windows.

On May 1927 the buildings and equipment of St. Joseph Mission at Gladwyn were deeded to the Diocese, free of all debt. Dr. Carter's rectorate continued until October 1928 when he resigned and retired from the active ministry. In their expressions of appreciation the vestry recorded: "Dr. Carter's eighteen years of active and devoted service leaves the parish in a better financial and physical condition than when he took charge." It noted "his kind hearted generosity in personally supporting financially the work of the parish and Diocese." It also recorded "Dr. Carter's Christian and gentlemanly character and lovable nature which has made our service on the vestry both a pleasure and a privilege."

On May 26th, 1929, the Rev. Ernest C. Earp was elected rector and assumed charge of the parish on September 1st of that year. A graduate of Wycliffe College in the University of Toronto, he had served the Church in Canada, England and Bermuda. From the day of his coming he received the unanimous and affectionate support of the Vestry and congregation. After ten years' service he was awarded the honorary degree of S.T.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and the honorary D.D. from The Philadelphia Divinity School. The anniversary was marked with a sermon by the Rev. and Hon. Canon Cody, president of Toronto University.

During his twenty years as Rector the vestry and congregation continued the good work of his distinguished predecessors. The chapel was furnished with seventeen memorials, the parish house was enlarged at a cost of $33,000. The chimes of ten bells were given in memory of Mr. D. B. C. Catherwood and the magnificent Fisher Memorial organ was installed. During Canon Earp's ministry over thirty Bishops preached in the Church. In addition to the American Bishops, we had visits from the present Archbishop of Sydney, Australia, the Archbishop of the West Indies, the Bishop of Exeter and the Bishop of Abedeen. Our esteemed and eminent friend and neighbor, Dr. Rufus M. Jones, preached on two occasions and the great missionary, Sir Wilfred Grenfell, preached twice. Perhaps the most memorable service was when war broke out and the First City Troop of Philadelphia paraded to church before its members left for active service. Canon Earp retired on September 30th, 1949, becoming Rector Emeritus and moving into the residence built for him by many friends, on the ground donated by Mrs. Stricker Coles. The Vestry record reads: "It is need-

less to quote figures to show the progress of the parish in his time. The tremendous increases in church attendance, membership and Sunday School enrollment are well-known. The Canon came to be Rector of a great parish and the parish acquired stature because he was its rector. His ministry here in the twenty years of his mature strength has made them golden years in the life of one of America's great parishes."

On October 1st, 1949, the Rev. Thorne Sparkman became rector. A Master of Arts of the University of South Carolina, Rhodes Scholar with a degree from Oxford, a B.D. from the Virginia Theological Seminary and Doctor of Divinity of the University of Chattanooga, Dr. Sparkman came to us in the fullness of his strength after distinguished service as rector of Christ Church, Baltimore, and St. Paul's, Chattanooga. The impact of his teaching and personality stirred the parish to renewed activity. In less than two years great progress has been made. Pew rents were abolished and a canvass of the parish by one hundred and fifty men increased the financial support. Work is going forward adding five class rooms to the parish house to accommodate the ever increasing numbers of Sunday School scholars.

The Church of the Redeemer has always given its share and often more than its share to the missionary work of the Church. Year after year the amounts increased until a climax was reached after the war. At that time the laymen of the parish, under the chairmanship of Mr. Rowland Evans, collected $106,000 for the Reconstruction and Advance Fund of $6,000,000. This present year marks a great offering of nearly $50,000 for the Diocesan Advancement Fund together with an increase of our own regular quota, now $17,500.00.

Appended to this outline of our Parochial history is a list of the distinguished gentlemen who have served as vestrymen. Their valuable and voluntary aid for one hundred years is hereby acknowledged and recorded. Leading citizens of the Main Line, they have given freely and generously of their time and talent to the work of the church. Descendents of the pioneer settlers like Rowland Evans, scions of old families like J. Hunter Ewing, who served for sixty years, Mr. James Rawle, a vestryman for fifty years, Mr. George Curwen, warden and vestryman for fifty years. Mr. George L. Morris, secretary of the vestry from 1910 to 1921 is still among us, honoured and beloved. Only the limitation of space forbids the mention of many names in the earlier years; yet the memory of men like Henry Whelen, A. R. Montgomery, Charles and Andrew Wheeler, Philip Godley, J. Randall Williams and S. Parker Williams remain like a benediction.

In more recent years we recall Mr. Cummins Catherwood, rector's warden and benefactor of the church, Mr. Stacy B. Lloyd, rector's warden, leading citizen and Christian gentleman, Mr. George R. Sinnickson, accounting warden and beloved friend. Algernon R. Clapp and William H. Hughes, Wulliam T. Plummer and John Dennison, George Peterson, senior vestryman and many others. To name members of the present vestry would be invidious. Suffice it to say that one and all uphold and enhance the great traditions of one hundred years. We bless the Lord for all these his servants, past and present vestrymen of the Church of the Redeemer.

Tribute is due to the women of the congregation for their unfailing support of the church throughout the century. From the first days until now they have ren-

dered invaluable service. In the Woman's Auxiliary, the Altar Guild, the Sunday School and choir they have sustained the parish and its missionary efforts. In recent years the Shortridge Guild and the Business Women's Group were added to the parish activities.

Eminent musicians have served the church. Miss Lycett and Mr. Wheeler were organists in the early days. Our venerable friend Mr. Edward Biddle Halsey was organist fifty years ago. The Rev. Mr. Barrington combined the duties of curate and organist. Mr. Witherspoon was organist and Sunday School superintendent. Mr. Strong led the boys' choir in the new church. In later years we recall Uselma C. Smith, and more recently Barron Smith. The present organist was trained in Hereford Cathedral and adds to his own artistry the fine tradition of Anglican church music. The choir sustains a high standard of music and makes every Sunday a festival.

The Sunday School on Lancaster Pike began with five children, three white girls and the two colored children of the sexton. The present enrollment is over three hundred and fifty. Who can estimate the influence of the Church School during one hundred years? Distinguished laymen have served as superintendents. Mr. John W. Townsend, Mr. J. Randall Williams, Mr. Henry Longmaid, Mr. Alan Wood and now Mr. John Mulford is in office.

The ancient and honourable office of sexton has been filled by a succession of faithful men until the present day. The minutes of 1911 record the resignation of William Hughes at the age of eighty-four, after thirty years service. He was an institution in himself and is still remembered.

It is evident from this brief review that the Church of the Redeemer has had a glorious century. We face the second hundred years believing God's promise that "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former glory".

* * * * *

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

Bless we the Lord that He inspired our fathers
To build this church in the Redeemer's name.
From age to age His loving care surrounds us,
Through changing years eternally the same.

Bless we the Lord, when we approach His altar
Our souls are nourished with the living bread.
Redeeming love recalls us when we falter,
Our wayward footsteps home to God are led.

Bless we the Lord for those whose work is ended,
Heroes of faith, brave victors in the fight,
Their spirits hover round us, each attended
By angel guardians of the saints in light.

Bless we the Lord; accept the prayer we offer,
Grant peace and concord in thy church alway,
May those who follow us rever this altar,
Thy benediction on their souls we pray.

ERNEST C. EARP.

VESTRYMEN
of the
CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

Frederic W. Porter	1851-1857
Jesse Gyger	1851-1853
Isaac Hazlehurst	1851-1851
John Hulme	1851-1857
Accounting Warden	
Lewis Wister	1851-1851
Joseph K. Eyre	1851-1853
David Morgan	1851-1864
Rector's Warden	
James Morgan	1851-1855
Owen Jones	1851-1860
Secretary	
William Miles	1851-1870
David Howard	1851-1852
George F. Curwen	1852-1901
Secretary, and Accounting Warden	
Isaac Hazlehurst	1853-1860
W. H. Drayton	1855-1856
Lewis Warner	1855-1865
P. McCall	1856-1860
S. W. Cattell	1857-1860
Francis C. Yarnall	1857-1874
James C. Booth	1860-1874
N. Parker Shortridge	1860-1915
Rector's Warden	
Jos W. Anderson	1860-1872
William Lawson	1862-1863
J. Hunter Ewing	1863-1922
Secretary, Accounting Warden, Rector's Warden	

John Marston, Jr.	1864-1866
Henry McCrea	1865-1866
J. L. Stadelman	1866-1869
John R. Whitney	1866-1874
William W. Montgomery	1870-1877
Rowland Evans	1870-1915
Arch R. Montgomery	1872-1918
Charles Wheeler	1873-1884
James Rawle	1874-1912
Henry Whelen	1875-1899
Frederick W. Morris	1875-1910
Secretary, Accounting Warden	
J. Randall Williams	1884-1921
Secretary and Accounting Warden	
Philip Godley	1900-1921
George F. Curwen, Jr.	1901-1921
George L. Morris	1910-1921
Secretary	
Parker S. Williams	1912-1921
J. Barton Townsend	1915-1921
Samuel W. Morris	1915-1919
William S. Morris	1919-1921
Stacy B. Lloyd	1921-1941
Accounting Warden, Rector's Warden	
D. B. Cummins Catherwood	1921-1929
Secretary, Rector's Warden	
Livinston L. Biddle	1921-
Accounting Warden	
George S. Robbins	1921-1923
F. King Wainwright	1921-1945
Secretary	
William H. Hughes	1921-1932
Jacques L. Vauclain	1921-1930
Henry R. L. Farrow	1921-

George Peterson	1923-1938
Horace Bullock	1923-1926
George R. Sinnickson	1926-1934
Accounting Warden	
Joseph Carson	1926-1951
Algernon R. Clapp	1926-1938
Frederic E. Camp	1927-1934
John W. Townsend, Jr.	1930-
Secretary	
M. Withington Clement	1930-
Rector's Warden	
H. Howard Ellison	1932-1948
John M. Denison	1934-1936
William T. Plummer	1935-1945
Rowland Evans	1937-
Clement B. Wood	1938-1940
Daniel A. Newhall	1938-
Henry P. Vaux	1941-
Francis W. Sinkler	1942-1950
Arthur C. Dorrance	1945-1946
Alfred H. Geary	1945-
Blackwell Newhall	1947-
John Mulford	1948-
F. R. Drayton	1950-
J. Kenton Eisenbrey	1951-